

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING

Performance and Registration Information Systems Management (PRISM)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is PRISM?

PRISM is a federal-state partnership intended to improve commercial motor vehicle safety. PRISM and recently signed PRISM legislation enables the Washington State Department of Licensing (DOL) to make sure that trucking companies, based in Washington, don't keep their International Registration Plan (IRP) license plate privileges if the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) has ordered them to cease interstate operations.

Is PRISM just another name for a modified IRP process?

No, but the IRP plate renewal process is where it all comes together. It's also the place where PRISM is most likely to directly affect you in terms of paperwork or additional information needed to renew your IRP plate. It ultimately depends on who applies for and renews the plate on your truck. The following examples will briefly explain how PRISM may affect you depending on whether you, or a company to whom you are leased, handles the IRP license plates renewal on your truck.

I am an owner-operator whose trucks are registered by a company to whom they are leased. What am I required to do in this process?

If you are leased to a company that handles the IRP plate renewal on your truck, then PRISM will probably be transparent to you. This is most common if you don't have your own operating authority and don't operate as a motor carrier in your own right. Instead, you simply lease on to a company that handles the license plate renewal process, payment of registration fees, etc.

If this is the case, you won't have to obtain a USDOT number or supply additional paperwork to keep your truck(s) moving. Chances are, you won't hear much about PRISM at all unless the company to whom you are leased starts having safety issues with the FMCSA. If that happens, then DOL will send you a letter stating that the company you have your truck(s) leased to is facing a possible federal shutdown order. If that happens, the plate(s) on your vehicle(s) may be suspended.

What are the requirements for owner-operators who register their own trucks?

Many owner-operators apply for and renew their IRP license plates themselves. As such, the following paperwork and information will be required to renew their IRP plates since Washington has joined the PRISM program.

USDOT Number information

First, you will have to provide your USDOT number and your Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) or Social Security number. If you have your own operating authority, you should already have a USDOT number. If you don't have your own operating authority and have never operated as a motor carrier yourself, chances are you don't have a USDOT number yet. That's because, up until the PRISM program came along, you weren't required to have one.

To get a number, all you have to do is go online to <http://www.usdotnumberregistration.com/> and follow the instructions to obtain a “Registrant” number. It’s extremely important to understand that this number does not provide you with operating authority and should not, under any circumstances, be marked on the side of your truck(s). This “registrant” USDOT number serves as a record to inform the U.S. DOT and DOL that you exist as somebody who registers commercial motor vehicles.

The next thing that you need is the USDOT number and FEIN or Social Security number of the motor carrier that will be responsible for the safety of your vehicle(s) during the registration year. If you are leased to a company, and that lease is expected to last for at least 30 or more days, then the company is considered the motor carrier responsible for safety. In other words, the motor carrier responsible for safety is the company that the FMCSA ultimately holds accountable for things like hours-of-service compliance, drug and alcohol testing and vehicle maintenance.

In some instances though, you will not have a lease agreement with a motor carrier at the time of registration. If that’s the case, you won’t need to provide the USDOT number, FEIN or SSN or the lessee motor carrier.

Motor Carrier Identification Report (MCS-150) update information

Under the PRISM program, DOL will work with the FMCSA to ensure that motor carriers keep their company data up to date. This includes things like their business address, number of trucks and drivers, etc. To accomplish this objective, DOL will check the date that the MCS-150 was last updated for every USDOT number on an IRP account. If the last update is over 12 months old at the time of the commencement of the fleet registration, then DOL will require an updated MCS-150 from the company associated with that USDOT number. You can check the last update of the MCS-150 for any USDOT number online at <http://www.saferysys.org>. Companies may now update their MCS-150 data electronically online at <http://www.usdotnumberregistration.com/>. If the data is updated online, you won’t have to come up with a paper form to renew your license plates.

What are the major points of the PRISM program that a motor carrier should remember?

If you are an IRP account holder and register your truck(s) in Washington State, you will be required to supply the following information at IRP renewal time.

- Your USDOT number and the appropriate FEIN or Social Security number;
- The USDOT number and FEIN or Social Security number of the motor carrier responsible for safety at the time of registration; and
- An updated MCS-150 for every USDOT number on the IRP account if one has not been updated within 12 months of the commencement of fleet registration.

With this information, no truck is registered through the IRP without identifying an entity responsible for safety. And more importantly, the safety status of every truck is checked to make sure the company hasn’t been ordered to cease interstate operations by the FMCSA.

If a carrier is issued a “registrant” USDOT number and then decides to get their own operating authority and go out on their own, is the carrier required to obtain a new USDOT number?

No. The carrier would retain the same number, but their status would be changed to motor carrier in the national motor carrier safety database called the Motor Carrier Management Information System (MCMIS). However, the carrier must complete the Form MCS-150A and enter the “New Entrant Program.”

Does the New Entrant Program apply to applicants for a “registrant” USDOT number?

No. Registrants are not part of the New Entrant Program as long as they remain a registrant.

Where can I get more information on PRISM?

Visit the FMCSA web site at www.fmcsa.dot.gov/factsfigs/prisbro.htm to read the PRISM Brochure.